

Submitted by: Duane A. Calvin, AC5AA
4102 Everest Ln
Austin, TX 78727

Docket: 03-104, and 04-37 Broadband over Power Lines

Regarding the current NPRM on BPL, it includes many positive elements, but I believe it will still leave amateur radio operators with unresolved issues. In particular, where I believe this proposal could be bolstered:

1. It needs to specify an exact timeframe in which interference complaints from amateur operators must be resolved. The response to a complaint should be required to be immediate, and the solution should be provided within a matter of hours – significantly less than 24 hours. One never knows when an emergency condition is going to arise in the United States or another part of the world where amateur operators will be involved in the relief process, and interference from BPL will need to react quickly to avoid degrading amateur service.
2. Power company response to a BPL customer complaint (regardless of the cause) must prohibit blaming a “ham radio operator” for the outage. I had an experience with AT&T related to telephone interference where, under their agreement with the FCC to repair equipment or offer filters, they were in complete defiance. Their reply was that my telephone was too near a transmitter and that it wasn’t the phone’s fault, but the fault of the transmitter. This will be a great temptation for the power companies, so this response to a customer must be prohibited and punishable by a hefty fine.
3. Penalties for failure to resolve documented complaint issues from amateurs need to be severe. Based on the past lack of performance of power companies to respond to HF interference caused by power lines, one can only expect that BPL, a technology they understand far less than power distribution, will suffer even more. A monetarily substantial penalty will be the only way of assuring compliance.
4. Mobile operation: A very key element of the amateur’s ability to respond to civil emergencies is the large fleet of mobile-capable HF stations. For example, in my truck I have a 100w HF/VHF/UHF radio capable of allowing me to be in contact with both local (VHF/UHF) emergency centers as well as remote (HF) locations while “at the scene.” If I encounter BPL interference en route, or at the scene, it *must* be able to be immediately curtailed near mobiles during the time they are near power lines carrying the signal. In order to assure capability, this needs to happen near mobile operators whether or not there is an emergency in progress. Without the ability to use, test, fine tune and perfect mobile operation, we will not be ready for an emergency when the time comes.

While these suggested improvements will help with the interference cause by BPL, it still leaves many services and potential services in harms way. For example, emergency services which do not regularly use their radios until an emergency arrives are likely to be surprised by BPL and their loss of communications ability. They may not even know why the interference is happening or what to do about it. This argues further for both very low radiated limits as well as an adaptive system that responds by blocking emissions of any type when a transmitter is activated in the area. It also suggests that a very vocal interference campaign by power companies be required so that customers and other potential HF users are alerted to the potential for interference, and how to go about reporting it so it can be resolved. Also, as noted in #2 above, this shouldn't be used as an opportunity to place blame on HF operators for BPL's technical inadequacies.

Even with those improvements, what is the recreational shortwave listener to do? The arguably biased US major media companies who control the content of much of the mainstream news cannot be compared to overseas broadcasters or others licensed to use HF transmission. Pollution of the HF spectrum is a mistake that will have unintentional consequences that could be detrimental to the ability of US citizens to pursue and understand national and international events.

Thank you for your consideration of these points.

Sincerely,

Duane A. Calvin
Amateur Radio License AC5AA
4102 Everest Ln
Austin, TX 78727

ac5aa@arrl.org